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ADOT meeting focuses on state's growth

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PRESCOTT - Population projections have Arizona's numbers more than doubling in the next four decades, and in preparation, the state is ramping up its long-range planning.

A group of [Arizona Department of Transportation](#) officials and consultants conducted a meeting in Prescott Thursday night as part of the first round of public outreach in the massive "Building a Quality Arizona" study.

James Zumpf, planning supervisor for ADOT, pointed out that this week's meeting was the first of three series of public sessions around the state. The next should take place by summer, and the concluding session - presenting the final product - should occur by late 2008 or early 2009.

Zumpf expects the "Building a Quality Arizona" final document to include a list of transportation projects that the study has determined as necessary to handle the state's additional 8 million residents by the year 2050.

While Arizona's population stood at about 6.1 million in 2005, the study is projecting that it will grow to 14.1 million by 2050.

"That's a large number of people for the state of Arizona," Zumpf told the approximately 25 people who turned out for the meeting at [Yavapai College](#). He noted that ADOT typically plans about 20 years in the future, but the expected population spike caused the state to "take a more proactive approach, and look out to 2050."

Yavapai County also will see considerable growth in the next 45 years or so, according to the study. In 2005, Yavapai County had about 212,700 people, but by 2050, that number should grow to about 418,700.

Those numbers, however, generated a question from local resident Ken Janecek, who has watched various transportation plans evolve, and has long debated the population numbers in local governments' recent 2030 Regional Transportation Plan.

That mid-2000s study projected the population of the [Central Yavapai Metropolitan Planning Organization](#) boundary area - including much of the tri-city area - at 321,718 by 2030.

That compares with the projection in the current state study of 355,400 for the entire county by 2030. Janecek has maintained that the local regional plan over-estimated its population numbers, which he said may have skewed the resulting recommendations.

The "Building a Quality Arizona" study cites the Arizona Department of Economic Security as its source for population numbers.

Jodi Rooney, administrator of CYMPO, said the consultants for the earlier local study "used the numbers they had available to them at the time." She added: "I'm going to stand by the numbers in the (2030 Regional

Transportation Plan)."

But Rooney noted that - to reflect any changing projections - CYMPO soon would be updating its numbers.

After hearing a presentation on the study goals, audience members split up into three groups to list their main transportation priorities in coming decades.

Among the top picks: light rail and the use of existing and new rail corridors; preservation of a wildlife corridor; planning for economic development; a connection between interstates 17 and 40; and the completion of new road corridors that CYMPO has proposed.

The "Building a Quality Arizona" study, which kicked off in May 2007, involves four different consultant firms - each handling a different region of the state - as well as a fifth firm to "stitch it all together," Zumpf said.

The Arizona Transportation Board earlier allocated \$7 million to cover the cost of the study, according to ADOT, and the study is in response to an executive order by Gov. [Janet Napolitano](#).

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